

Washington, DC -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez, a Member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, issued the following statement at the opening of Wednesday's legislative hearing on H.R. 2015, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), in the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions. Congresswoman Sánchez is an original co-sponsor of ENDA, which prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

"Thank you, Chairman Andrews. As an original co-sponsor and strong supporter of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, I appreciate your work to put together this hearing so that we can learn more, and the American people can learn more, about the employment discrimination that takes place here in America—legally—every day. More importantly, this hearing gives us an opportunity to do something about it.

"Ending employment discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people by enacting ENDA is such a common sense solution, and consistent with the American principles of freedom, justice, and equality that it's amazing to me that in 2007, we still haven't passed this bill.

"ENDA is the most important civil rights bill that we will have the opportunity to pass during the current Congressional cycle.

"Americans believe that if you work hard and do your job, you should be rewarded. And, Americans believe that this basic principle should apply across the board.

"Poll after poll reveals that an overwhelming majority of Americans agree someone shouldn't lose a job or be denied a promotion simply for being gay or lesbian.

"Americans also believe that it is already illegal to do so. Unfortunately, in many states, it isn't. That's why today's hearing is so important.

"Passing ENDA is consistent with the other work we are doing in this Committee, and throughout the House, to protect America's workers. We have acted to increase the minimum wage, to make college more affordable, and to strengthen Title VII so that companies cannot hide gender discrimination behind secretive wage policies.

"We have acted to ensure that employers provide mental health care as part of their health benefits and to promote wage parity between men and women. Now, we are acting to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender workers from on-the-job discrimination. It's been a long time coming.

"It is NOT OK to deny someone a job, a raise, or a promotion because of his or her real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. And now is the time for Congress to say so. After more than thirty years of struggle, we have a chance to give this important issue the attention it deserves.

"The American people are counting on us to make the law consistent with our values. I am

proud that, as a member of this Committee, I can help make that happen.

“Again, thank you Mr. Chairman.”